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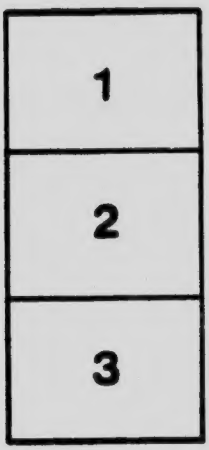

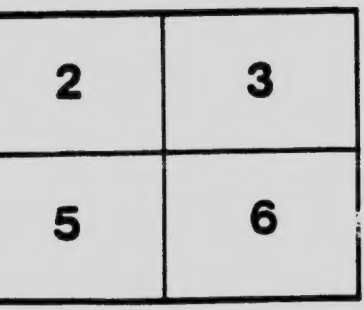

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GEORGE JOH

Toronto

Based on details of a
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Halifax Herald
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EDISH MINER

Being

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By

JOHN MENGE, B. A.
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The Swedish Miner

A True Canadian Tale of the Foord Pit

The New Arrival

Far to the northerly-west of an ocean-encircled province
Where the shipping of lands far remote from our shores did long since
Come for unloading, and lading of fish, or of coal, or of oysters,
Rounding Cape Breton's bleak shores, or, if passing by darksome cloisters
Straight to the West'ard thro' Gut Canso—dismally darksome caverns,
Echoing ocean's euphonious murm'rings, like wayside taverns
Nightly resembling, their pitchy enchantings, the sounds of their voices
Numerous, weirdly re-echoing all that aggrieves, rejoices
Audibly,—unto the harbor of Pictou in Nova Scotian
North mid-lands, many a sailor lad came from the stormier ocean,
Welcoming rest and delightful change from the brine's discomfort,
Only to start off anon from this leisure in the keener transport.

Sixty and six the recordings have mark'd equinoctial
Seasons since straying to Stellarton, footsore and weary, impartial
Wholly to soil and inviting acclimatization, truly
Seeking employment, from Pictou a prodigal Swedish cooli
Came to the mines that were proximate, wishing escape from his sea-life.

Employment

Sunny and beaming as moon full lit, wearing no scars of stern strife,
Boyish and strong, by displacement or special arrangement "put on,"
Worker became in the Foord Pit. Soon a companion he fought on
"Picking" a way to a fellow's successful reward for his toiling,
Come to be jolly and lik'd by associates or comrades, soiling
Sailor-bronz'd hands and sea suitings with grimy and sootiest coal-dust,
Willingly honest withal, though he toil'd within earth's dark, grim crust.

Coming to Himself

Day after day pass'd him digging and delving with full tried miners,
Solitude compassing comradeship, creeping as cold entwiners
Creep parasitically round the living envelopingly
Till from the evermore deepening shadows the men woke singly,
Stirr'd by the ghostliest flickerings, sometimes by recollections
Dimly arising like ghouls in the night to demand corrections
Instantly. Loneliness seized him and made him her tool, for conscience
Hinder'd not, seeing his memory, stirr'd up the past intentions

Mocking endearing affection's caressings of home and of mother,
Fatherly care all unheeded, and years without news of the brother
Sent to his only remember'd and so long forgotten babe-sister,
Vivid in pictur'd reflection of home when as baby he kiss'd her.

Lo! as he thought on this past and of how as a boy he wander'd
Straying from all that was hallow'd in life, and e'en boyhood squander'd
(Running to sea at that tenderest age, in his childhood's tenth year),
Tears of repentance and penitent grief to the great coal-plinth near
Dropp'd from the miner inhuman, from face which in dimness this night
Markings of sorrow reveal'd. Of his story he told naught till quite
Many a week, tho' intensely his sighing requir'd sympathy.
Longings for home and forgiveness infill'd him and gave apathy
Tremblingly folding courageous endeavor to hide all his sighings,
Even from intimate fellows, despite good workmen's vyings
Ever to conquer reserve on the part of a sullen workman.
Finally, yielding, he roll'd off his tale as he would his jerkin.

Letters

Soon was there genuine sympathy felt and express'd by many.
Each had enough of the sorrows of life to encourage any
Prodigal lad to attend to the warning, and each admonish'd
Speedily writing, to make correspondence rejoice astonish'd
Parents with letters of tidings at last from their long forgotten
Truant but penitent son of transgression. Then begotten
Harassing thought of tormenting dimensions to stir him sadly:—
"Were they now dead? Or the one, or the both?" Yet with haste he gladly
Reach'd to the paper-box. Scare could he write to express all the feelings
Welling within him, or say in the words of a child what dealings
Sailing the sea had been his, nor indeed in them "what insitins',
Perillus travellin's, werrisom' thinkin's and 'fensive fightin's."

Once and again, as in childhood with heartfelt emotions swelling,
He was a child at the knee of his parent against whom rebelling
Pardon he sought amid sobbings, "O mother, dear mother, O mother,
Would I had heeded your counsels in boyhood, and not, dear mother,
Wander'd from you and from father and home and my babe-hood's sister,
Leaving the school and the master and all for the sea—dear sister!
Is she alive? Will you tell me, is sister yet living?
Cruel I've been to forget in this life that I ever once living
Relatives had. O forgive me, my relatives all, and do let me
Come to your home in the new and in you be befriended, let me."
Thus he entreated for pardon's permissions in penitent refrains.
Sweeten'd with tears that were hot as the sun that distils dews or rains.

Still in the homeland the parents awaited some years for tidings
Often communing in silence, at times in their griefs confidings,

Saying to neighbors or friends in distress, "Our boy is dead, sir,
Else he would write!" But the mother and sister along cape-heads or
Loftier ridges, full often inquiringly look'd o'er the widersea
Thinking of him who had gone as a lad from the near Zuyder Zee
Into the distance beyond—in his perilous venturesomeness
Seeking the greater commotions o' freedom which Denmark's dullness,
Harass'd by Heligoland's jurisdiction ne'er gave. And if now
Wishing or praying would bring him they yearningly sought as a gift how
He might be given to them, and returning again be near them
Soon. But the boy did not come. Was he dead? Or, in doubt, did fear them?
Lo! from the mails a remarkable letter arriv'd one ev'ning
Bearing the stamp-head of Britain's great queen, and the post's engrav'ning,
Showing the mark of one "Stellarton, Canada," from far across seas—
Come to the mother. Then joys indescribable, healing loss, seize
Each of the three, as the winsome young maiden o'er mother's shoulder
Helps in the reading and, listening keenly, the father, some older,
Opens the judgment, emboldened'd by rougher experiences,
Seated recliningly. Into their eyes (as in Nature's defences)
Strangely that luminous light from the lines that read "Our boy alive"
Shot up as beacons of joy in a city beleaguer'd make survive,
Safe and invincible, all that are living within. And seldom
Letters did offer forgiveness more hearty full laden with welcome.

Saving for Home

Soon in the town ev'ry man and the others did learn how Svensen
Letters had got from his home, and in time would be willing—toils on
Homeward to turn, and in truth was already anticipating
Thitherward sailing for Christmas festivity, often debating
What he might save from his scanty week's wages, to social comrades
Often entrusting his heart's fatuation, tho' certainly some lads
Thoughtless became and forgetful of others' concerns compietely.
Swede tho' he was and a seaman but lately, to act discreetly
Never occurr'd to him. Seemingly each of the townsmen honest
Sympathy gave him, encouraging each of his hopes and fondest
Dreamiest glimmerings, blithesomely heightening expectation,
Guiding his gloomiest gropings with gleamings of delectation.

Vainly are set all aspiring desires in human thinking
If in the quicksands is nought to succeed in preventing sinking;
Vainly each hope is securely implanted in human bosoms
If in expansion and growth there is nothing but blighted blossoms.
Brightly the gleamings of lights in the home do illumine friendships,
Barring the entrance to gloom till some tragical break in kinships
Cuts off the light-giving current abruptly. For perils e'er follow
Quick upon gloom. Therefore, seldom extinguish'd tho' burning hollow
Luminous lives could become. Oft before the effulgent hearth-light

Letters were read more than once and again which the lad did indite,
Giving assurance of speedy return; so that now were counted,
Even the days to the Christmas approaching—in gloom surmounted!

Slowly the weeks sped away, yet not more slow than fastly approaching
Clouds that precede and envelop a storm, from a speck encroaching
Till in a moment there breaks a terrific explosion,
Filling the air with a dread unforeseen, and complete confusion.
Gas in the mine and a blunder—and miners to instant tomb brought!

The Home

Slowly the days of the Autumn on-crept in the home where bloom sought
Rosy fulfilment of radiant joy in anticipation.
Slower the periods when after November, the long duration
Paus'd with the lapsing of days into weeks and a month without news
Written or cabled of him they expected. Sometimes home crews,
Coming from over the seas, in occasional stray hints, tidings
Brought to their door, but from Stellarton, these had not e'en confidings.

Daily in port the same seamen that came entertain'd each hearer
Merrily, quaffingly, drinking his health in full goblets—dearer
Far to their wishes than tossing on billows. Then certain stray hints
Falling, occasion'd inquiry that drew out from these some gleam glints
Shedding effulgence of light on the tale, or relieving deep gloom
Quickly by shading of sadder sides roughly e'er some beweep doom,
Soon as they hear of the tragic occurrences. Once two seamen,
Lately en route from Jamaica and the Indies e'en like reckless freemen,
Told of adventures in Isle of Cape Breton and North Nova Scotia,
Previous to touching Bermuda and Kingstone. "Sandy, be gosha,"
Put in the younger, reminding the other, "remember Svensen,
Moony that left us at Pictou for Stellarton, Moony Svensen?"

Brighter the gleaming that flash'd from the eye of the maiden tender,
Kissing her lover in manner superbly indignant offender
Since he unhappily stood at the moment when telling this news,
Given unvarnish'd by yon bluff informant of swarthy sinews.
Fairer and haler the hue in the bloom of the blushing roses,
Filling those beautiful cheeks, as she yieldingly soon reposes
All of her sadder misgivings in him, and interprets his meaning,
Fully assur'd of her prodigal Charlie's submission, gleaning
Gleanier sheaves from the fragments incoming with hope thus recent
Rightly to swell the elation within at their prospect decent
Op'ning before them now ever more fully, of seeing her brother
Come as she gladly expected, be greeted, and greet her lover.
Christmas as usual approach'd with rejoicings apparent for all,
Gaily in Sweden's dull sombre, by stirringly gladsome choral

Melodies chiming from steeple and tow'r quaint
Coming as quickly responsive in Nature as all th
Joys of pulsating emotion, with easy vibration, wi
Tunefully, gently, and freighted with reverent
Heaven's festivity. Children, expectant, their
Maidens will glee in the spending of labor and
Difficult tasks as assign'd for the season; whils
Busy with weaving or superintending—with thre
Generous as gracious, will readily change the m
Blooming the homes of the lowly with whispers

Festive the children's hall where the evergreens
Over the luminous spruces resplendent—afar fr
Whitening pines in the neighboring forests. Fest
Brighten'd in candle-lit brilliance with streaming
Bunting and flags of the kingdom, and tables w
Dinner for all by the host; but the gifts which
There on the tree in array were suspended with
Parents had gifts for their children, and childr

Lo! from without with abruptness came sudden
Sleighs on the glassy or crisp-like snow, and a
"Svensen, Ben Svensen, man Svensen, come
Forward, on-pressing, the man with a trem
Stood to receive the unwelcome news which a
Message by cable had brought, how in Stellarton
Buried the toilers, and dead in there farthest a
Dropp'd all festivity's pleasures at once quite
Falls that is heaten and flatten'd in path of th
Sweden's grey sombre that instant completely e
Darkening Yule, and
In Stellarton gloom indescribab
Aching acuteness in lowly affections as keen as
Hands and the signs of anguish of sobbing co
Made in a mine will affect the acquainted abo
—Mustering sorrow's distractions to harass th
Shocking to silence that stuns the bereav'd as

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